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AUTHOR	Fritz, Kathleen M.
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ABSTRACT

During academic year 2001-02, approximately 165 students in eight sections of Introductory Spanish and French completed weekly online quizzes as part of their final grades. While most of them completed traditional quizzes, two third-semester Spanish classes completed multimedia listening comprehension quizzes based on audio and video from the Web. All of the quizzes were accessed from the University's Blackboard account. Students were instructed to log in and follow the on-screen instructions to complete the assignment. This paper focuses on creation of the traditional quiz; creation of the multimedia quizzes; and saving and making available the quizzes. It also presents results from anonymous online student surveys that asked about students' experiences with the digital quizzes. Results indicate that the weekly quizzes were viable for foreign language classes. Because the students successfully manipulated the new medium, between 10-15 minutes of class time were saved each week, which were more profitably used in the mastery of course material. Instructor time was also greatly conserved since the quizzes were self-correcting and self-tabulating. Disadvantages to using the Blackboard system included the integrity of the examination process itself (since students were unsupervised during their quizzes) and, for the quiz creator, locating stable, appropriate, and archived audio/video for the multimedia quizzes. (Contains 9 references.) (SM)

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Using Blackboard 5 to Deliver Both Traditional and Multimedia Quizzes On-Line for the Foreign Language Class

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August 2003

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Using Blackboard 5 to Deliver Both Traditional and Multimedia Quizzes on-line for the Foreign Language Class

During the Academic Year 2001-2002, approximately 165 students in eight sections of Introductory Spanish and French were asked to complete weekly on-line quizzes as part of their final grades (15% of the total). While the majority of these students completed traditional quizzes (comprised of multiple choice, fill-in-the blank, etc.), two third semester Spanish classes completed multimedia listening comprehension quizzes based on audio and video from the web.

All of the quizzes were accessed from the University's Blackboard account and students were instructed to log-in and follow the instructions on screen to complete the assignment.

I. Getting started – The Creation of the Traditional Quiz

The creation of on-line quizzes using Blackboard is a relatively easy to use process which presents only a few more steps than the actual typing of the quiz. Once the instructor has logged on to Blackboard using his/her User ID and password, the first step

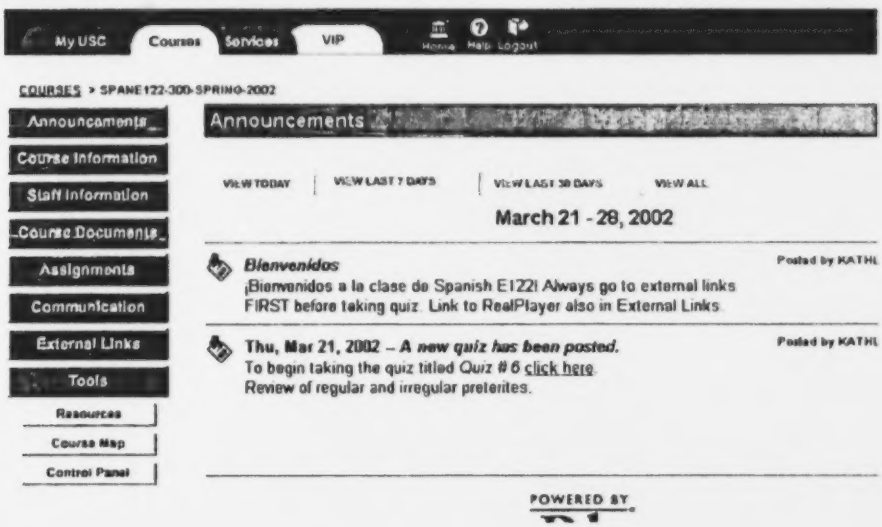

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Figure I: Instructor's View of the Welcome Screen.

is to locate the Control Panel at the lower left hand corner of the Welcome page as shown in Figure I.

The Control Panel is a part of the Blackboard Welcome page that is only available to the instructor. By accessing the Control Panel, the instructor controls all aspects of the Blackboard course page. Once the Control Panel is opened, the Assessment Manager is seen at the right of the screen. Clicking on the Assessment Manager leads to the notation "Add Quiz/Exam." You are now ready to write your on-line quiz after the completion of three preliminary steps: First, the quiz must be named (or numbered); second, a description of the assessment must be given. The description need not be long or complicated, in fact, a notation like "first conjugation verbs," or "definite articles" will suffice. The third step, again not onerous, involves providing the students with instructions for completing the quiz. The instructions can be purposely vague, at this point, however, unless the instructor has a precise idea of the type of questions which will be asked. Since my quizzes were often a mixture of 3 of the different question types, I delayed writing the instructions until the end of the quiz writing process. .

These preliminary steps, which have taken a few words to explain, are accomplished in a few seconds of pointing, clicking and submitting. It is now time to consider what type of question to write. As alluded to above, Blackboard provides significant latitude since the platform allows for 7 question types (six of which are self-correcting). I found three different types to be useful in a foreign language course. The Fill-in-the-Blank option turned out to be much more than the simple placing

of one correct word in a blank. Indeed, as shown in Figure II, multiple words could be placed in one blank, as long as each word was separated by a space. This has great utility for any translation exercise where word order is immutable. The Multiple Choice option allowed for the testing of all sorts of material and the instructor has the option of providing up to 20 possible choices. As shown in Figure III, the True False option could be easily adapted to test discernment of correct grammatical construction.

Since it was important that the quizzes be self-correcting, I did not use the Short Answer/Short Essay format which must be graded by hand. This option, however, could be profitably used for compositions and other exercises requiring longer and more personalized answers.

It is obvious that not all types of questions are equally well-suited to the material to be tested or to the degree of difficulty desired. Having said this, however, it should be noted that almost all the standard material taught in lower-level language classes is suitable for testing using Blackboard. Testing of verb conjugations can be easily done using the Multiple Choice option or by requiring the students to fill in the correctly conjugated verb with the Fill-in-the-Blank option. It sometimes happens that students or instructors are obliged to produce diacritical marks during the course of the quiz. This is far from an insurmountable difficulty for students using a desktop computer. By simultaneously depressing Alt and the ASCII code on the numeric keypad (130 gives é, for example), the desired character will appear. Things are a bit problematic for users of laptops, however. Prior to pressing Alt, they must first engage the system by pressing Shift and Number Lock and only then simultaneously depress Alt and the ASCII Code on the keys which display the superimposed numbers. (There is no numeric keypad on a

laptop.) Since not all students were able to follow these instructions, quizzes were generally written which did not require the use of diacritical marks.

Name: Quiz # 2

Instructions: Translate the words you see into Spanish. Pay attention to agreement as we discussed in class. Take the quiz after reviewing your notes from August 30. Pay attention to the use of the definite and indefinite article.

Question 1 **Fill in the Blank** **(10 points)**
Question: A red table

Question 2 **Fill in the Blank** **(10 points)**
Question: a purple backpack

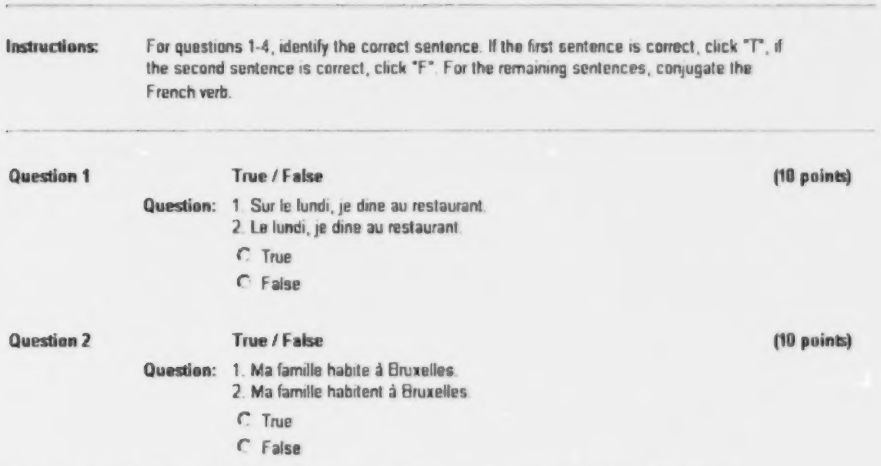
Question 3 **Fill in the Blank** **(10 points)**

Figure II. Fill-in the-blank questions testing adjective agreement

Adjective agreement, article agreement and the formation of singular and plural, concepts which consume so much of the beginning students'energy, are easily reinforced using the Fill-in-the-blank option. Students must fill in specific words in a certain order to receive full credit. An example from an actual on-line quiz (Figure II) shows the ease with which the quiz can be written by choosing the "Fill-in-the blank" option from the scroll down menu and clicking to submit.

Since I wanted first semester students to realize that adjectives generally follow nouns and must follow the rules of agreement, I asked that the students type in the answer in Spanish or French. Since the system will reject any words not in exact sequence, I found this to be a good test of the students' mastery. The rules of capitalization need not be respected since this option is not case sensitive. This example illustrates both the ease of quiz making as well as one of the potential drawbacks: as constructed, the quiz allows

for no partial credit. While an instructor will immediately recognize that an individual student has mastered agreement but not adjective positioning or vice versa, the computer program will not and will not accord partial credit. Instructors wishing to modify scores can always do so by accessing the students' entry in the on-line gradebook, located in the same Assessment section used to create quizzes..



Instructions: For questions 1-4, identify the correct sentence. If the first sentence is correct, click "T", if the second sentence is correct, click "F". For the remaining sentences, conjugate the French verb.

Question 1 **True / False** **(10 points)**

Question: 1. Sur le lundi, je dine au restaurant.
2. Le lundi, je dine au restaurant.

○ True
○ False

Question 2 **True / False** **(10 points)**

Question: 1. Ma famille habite à Bruxelles.
2. Ma famille habitent à Bruxelles.

○ True
○ False

Figure III. True/False question format used as Grammaticality Test

I found that the typical True/False question, never much in evidence in foreign language classes, offered a unique question format to test the students' ability to discern grammatical differences. (See Figure III) Students were presented with two sentences in the foreign language that normally differed in only one detail. They were then asked to choose "T" if the first sentence was correct and "F" if the second sentence was correct.

I felt that these grammaticality judgment tasks, borrowed from the field of SLA research (5) tested students' reasoning about grammatical structures that had been presented in class and were less mechanical than those quizzes which only required them to fill in the blanks with conjugated verbs.

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II. The creation of multimedia quizzes

The creation of the weekly multimedia quiz greatly interested me. This was not only because it was possible to set up such a quiz but because of the larger implications that such a "delivery system" as Blackboard could have on the investigation of auditory processing. Since my focus was on listening comprehension in my third semester classes, I searched the web to find audio (and later video) that would be appropriate for classes at this level. (Except in one instance, I did not assign any multimedia quizzes to my first or second semester classes.)

At the end of the first week of creating audio quizzes I learned an important lesson, which, however, greatly limited the web material I could use. While many countries throughout the world broadcast in French and Spanish, these broadcasts (mainly, news) are located in what is called a temporary file so that, while BBC Mundo (BBC's Spanish service at http://www.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/news) broadcasts the news in Spanish on an hourly basis, the 11AM broadcast is placed in a temporary file that is replaced by a new broadcast at noon. This means that a listening comprehension quiz based on the 11AM broadcast will be totally obsolete if the students take it at noon.

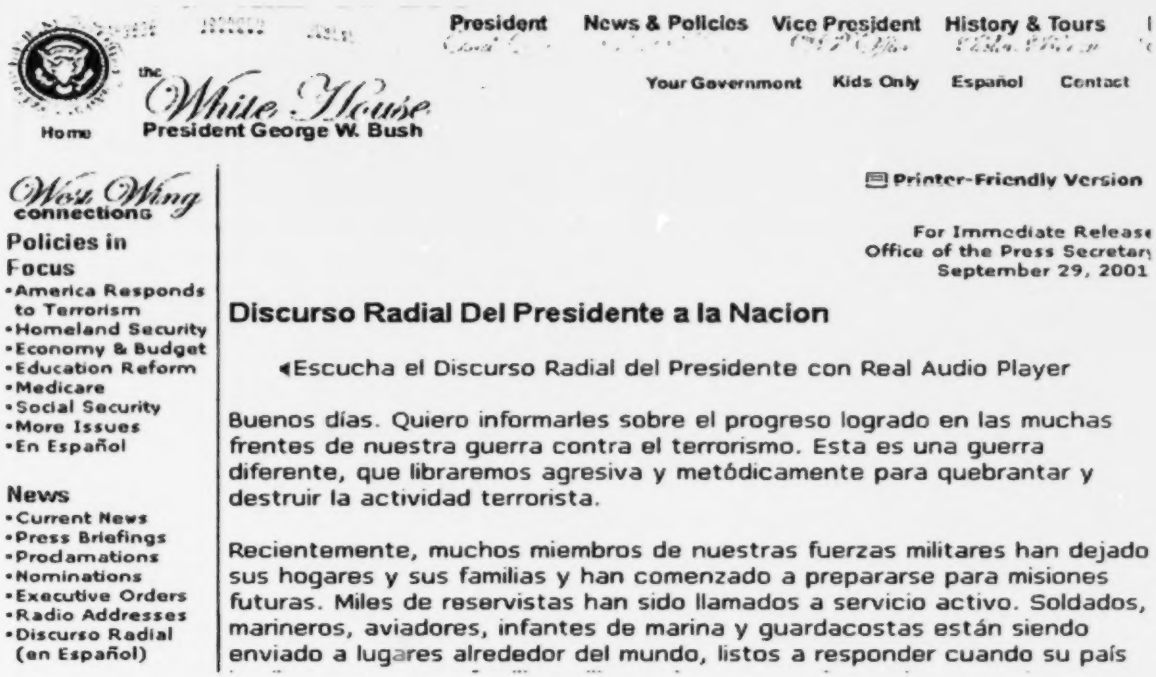
The construction of the multimedia quiz with audio and video material from the web is more labor intensive than the writing of the traditional quiz. For one thing, it requires not only that a quiz be written (in this instance of the listening comprehension type) but also that suitable material be identified and accessed from the web. The suitability of the web material depends not only on the level of the class but also on the availability and stability of the video or audio clip. In fact, stability of the link is actually

the more important factor because, while the instructor can easily control the level of difficulty of the quiz, he/she is powerless in the face of a link which is unstable.

I soon learned that the type of stable audio or video file needed was called an "archived file." Archived files are those that the server keeps on-line for a period of time (and does not take off-line after a few hours). Since the quizzes were done on a weekly basis, it was necessary to find web files that would stay on line for at least 6 days, thus allowing the students approximately a week to listen to and/or view the material before taking the quiz.

As sometimes happens, a solution was found in an unexpected place. The White House in Washington, D.C. announced in May of 2001 that each of the President's Saturday morning weekly radio addresses would now be broadcast in Spanish as well as English. An investigation of the White House site (www.whitehouse.gov) revealed that not only was each radio broadcast delivered by a native speaker--President Bush exceptionally delivered the first speech in Spanish on May 5, 2001--but more interestingly, from a pedagogical standpoint, a complete Spanish transcript was provided for each radio address. Students could only benefit by listening to the audio and following along with the transcript. In addition, the fact that the weekly broadcasts were extremely topical would facilitate understanding.

For a six or seven week period consecutively students were required to listen to a radio address that had been delivered the previous Saturday morning. Soon after each Saturday's address, I would listen to the speech and write 10 comprehension questions based on the content of the speech. Sometimes these questions were True/False and other times they were multiple choice. Since the weekly addresses were available in English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News & Policies
Vice President
History & Tours
Your Government
Kids Only
Español
Contact
the White House
President George W. Bush
Home
West Wing connections
Policies in Focus
•America Responds to Terrorism
•Homeland Security
•Economy & Budget
•Education Reform
•Medicare
•Social Security
•More Issues
•En Español
News
•Current News
•Press Briefings
•Proclamations
•Nominations
•Executive Orders
•Radio Addresses
•Discurso Radial (en Español)
Printer-Friendly Version
For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
September 29, 2001
Discurso Radial Del Presidente a la Nacion
Escucha el Discurso Radial del Presidente con Real Audio Player
Buenos días. Quiero informarles sobre el progreso logrado en las muchas frentes de nuestra guerra contra el terrorismo. Esta es una guerra diferente, que libraremos agresiva y metódicamente para quebrantar y destruir la actividad terrorista.
Recientemente, muchos miembros de nuestras fuerzas militares han dejado sus hogares y sus familias y han comenzado a prepararse para misiones futuras. Miles de reservistas han sido llamados a servicio activo. Soldados, marineros, aviadores, infantes de marina y guardacostas están siendo enviado a lugares alrededor del mundo, listos a responder cuando su país

Figure IV. The President's Weekly Radio Address in Spanish.

on the same website, I wrote all the questions in Spanish. The goal was that the students be exposed to good, clear Spanish and that this task be reinforced by having the transcript in front of them.

While I felt that the White House web site offered a good starting point for a semester of multimedia quizzes, I was not convinced that it represented a true test of listening comprehension. Students who wanted to could simply scan the transcript and answer the questions without ever having listened to any Spanish at all. In this case, the exercise would be a reading comprehension exercise only, which, although useful, did not

increase student exposure to spoken Spanish. The time had nevertheless come to find a new site that would more closely be an exercise in listening comprehension.

Occasionally, there is an additional obstacle to be dealt with in presenting students with multimedia quizzes: Students have difficulty downloading the RealPlayer plug-in without which they will be unable to hear or see topics presented. A greater problem and the single most recurrent one is that students become "locked out" of the Blackboard quiz site after listening to or viewing the assigned website from the External Links section—the default setting allows for only one quiz entry. The only remedies are for the instructor to reset the quiz on the individual grade report allowing the student to take the quiz again or instruct students to minimize the screens. During the second semester, therefore, I decided to allow the multimedia quiz takers to have multiple entries to each week's Blackboard quiz . This option, provided for in the "Save and Make Available" menu, totally solved the problem but at a cost which will be discussed later.

The Voice of America, a US governmental agency, (www.voa.gov.), broadcasts news and cultural programming from its studios in Washington, D.C. Considering the breadth of its foreign language broadcasting, it is a clear rival to the BBC World's Service. VOA broadcasts to Latin America include a weekly television program called "Conversemos" which is broadcast live by satellite and archived on the internet for one week.

The "Conversemos" program turned out to be an excellent vehicle for a multimedia listening quiz using the Blackboard platform. Since the program is archived for 7 days (from Thursday evening to the following Thursday evening) it allowed the students ample opportunity to view the broadcast and answer the comprehension questions which

had been written in English. Precisely because the comprehension questions were written in English, students could focus on listening to the content of the program without being impeded by their Spanish language reading levels. (As had sometimes been the case for The White House quizzes.)

The broadcasts were made available on Blackboard by providing a link in the External Links section (see Figure I). Students were instructed to view 10 minutes of the program (by consulting the clock on the RealPlayer screen) and then answer the self-correcting listening comprehension questions. The VOA link, unlike many other broadcast sites such as those of Chilean, Venezuelan and Argentine TV, was highly and consistently stable. For the test creator, there was an additional benefit to the VOA link: It needed to be entered only once in the External Links section since VOA "rotated" the "Conversemos" program out of the same link each week.

There are several other advantages to the VOA program: one is that the programming is topical. In the weeks following the attacks of September 11th, "Conversemos" focused on bioterrorism –a subject many in the US were extremely familiar with. At times, however, the programs were far removed from my students' knowledge base—a program focusing on the FARC of Colombia could not be profitably used.

Over all, however, the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. Of special interest is that the web broadcasts present both native and highly proficient non-native speakers. The producers of "Conversemos" frequently invite US experts with near-native proficiency to participate in its round table discussion. Since "Conversemos" is also a call-in program, students are exposed to other accents from Central and South America.

In one instance, the students were quick to note that a caller from Peru spoke differently from the other panelists of that week's program.

The use of "Conversemos" was an unqualified success as a listening comprehension exercise and it met all the criteria that I had set: the video and audio were clear, the link was stable, and the subject matter was topical and interesting.

III. The Final Step—Saving and Making Available

Before students can take the quiz that has been written, it must be "saved and made available," in other words, "put on line." This process is begun by clicking on the aptly named "Save and Make Available" radio button which always appears at the end of each quiz. If you wish only to save the quiz but are not yet ready to put it on-line, click on the "save" radio button only.

Care must be taken here both with the body of the text and the quiz settings. Proof your quiz carefully: Over the course of writing approximately 50 quizzes during an academic year, some serious errors were made which included the inadvertent providing of wrong answers and the misassigning of point values for the quizzes. Perhaps the greatest drawback to the Blackboard system is that these and other errors cannot be corrected after the fact. Unlike a hard copy quiz which can be easily amended in class, this electronic sort is unalterable once on-line. Two remedies are available, however. One, is to make the quiz unavailable and lose all grades thus far posted or posting an announcement in the quiz directions alerting the students to the error which has been made.

Once you have thoroughly checked your quiz and clicked on the "Save and Make Available" radio button, a new page will appear asking if you want to make the assessment available. This will generate an announcement informing the students of the presence of a new quiz. Since the announcement appears on the course's Welcome Page and invites them to take the quiz, I have always found it to be useful.

One of the great benefits of the Blackboard system is that the quiz can be put on a "timer" and programmed to go on and off-line. It will always be available to the instructor, however. Since the students were on a strict weekly schedule of quizzes, the quizzes were programmed to be activated at noon Friday and be deactivated at noon the following Friday. Other worthwhile options to be checked on the Save and Make Available Page include "Show Detailed Results" and "Reveal Correct Answer "which allow students to see the correct answer after finishing the quiz—this is a great learning tool. The button "Feedback Enabled" allows the instructor to provide explanatory comments for the incorrectness of an answer given or praise for a correct one. In an exercise of the French partitive, a student who had filled in "de l' " in the sentence "Je ne bois pas _____eau minérale," would have not only received the correct answer of "d' " but would have been reminded that the sentence is negative and precedes a vowel and thus requiring "d'." This raises the level of the quiz to a tutorial rather than a simple assessment.

On the other hand, the option to "allow multiple attempts" is a problematic on; while useful in exercises where students are liable to be "locked out" (a particular risk during the multimedia listening exercises), it allows all students to retake the quiz any number of times and get a perfect score. Perhaps future incarnations of Blackboard will

allow the instructor to specify the exact number of attempts allowed as well as provide score averaging. While it is not a bad thing in itself to award student diligence, allowing unlimited attempts does little to help the instructor evaluate the students' progress over time, nor does it encourage students to improve their performance on their own. The last option on the Save and Make Available page allows the instructor to set a time limit for the quiz. While I set these controls during the first semester (for 15 to 20 minutes), students expressed anxiety about seeing a ticking clock on the screen. Since student surveys at the end of the first semester revealed that students had spent no more than 15 minutes anyway doing traditional quizzes anyway I do not feel it appropriate to limit the time allotted for each assessment. This may not, of course, be the case with your group of students.

IV. The results of student surveys

At the end of each semester, I asked the students to complete an anonymous on–line survey on Blackboard regarding their experiences with the digital quizzes. In order to induce their participation during the busy days following the last day of classes, I granted each respondent a 1% point addition to their final grade. I stressed that their responses would be completely anonymous and that Blackboard would reveal their participation without revealing their answers.

Since there were two types of assessments given, traditional and multimedia, there were two types of surveys. Additionally, from my conversations with students, I knew that many had never taken a Blackboard quiz or if they had, that it had been on a very sporadic basis. The first questions on all the surveys, therefore, for the purposes of setting

a baseline was to determine the percentage of students who had never taken a Blackboard quiz.

	Fall 2001			Spring 2002		
Question:	Sp. 1	Sp. 3	Fr. 1	Sp. 2	Sp. 3	Fr. 2
Prior to this course, or another course with this same instructor, I had never taken a Blackboard quiz.	79%	69%	86%	64%	94%	92%
	N=38	N=16	N=14	N=39	N=16	N=12

Table I. Percentage of Students who had never taken a Blackboard Quiz.

The numbers in Table I clearly reflect a great untapped opportunity to use Blackboard for assessment purposes. When reviewing these figures, it is significant to note that the majority of the surveyed students were not freshmen but were upperclassmen who had delayed fulfilling their language requirement until their junior or senior years. Despite their seniority on campus, then, few had had any experience with Blackboard quizzes prior to enrolling in the Spanish or French classes in question.

The students were also surveyed on the initial level of difficulty they encountered using the Blackboard platform as shown in Table II. The multiple choice responses to the question: "Initially, did you find the Blackboard system, very easy, moderately easy, etc?" is found in Table II.

Question:	Fall 2001			Spring 2002		
Initially, did you find the Blackboard System?	Sp. 1	Sp.3	Fr.1	Sp.2	Sp.3	Fr.1
Very easy to use	42%	31%	29%	49%	50%	33%
Moderately easy to use	50%	38%	57%	46%	44%	58%
Difficult to use	8%	19%	14%	5%	6%	8%
Very difficult to use	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total percentage finding Blackboard difficult or very difficult to use:	8%	31%	14%	5%	6%	8%
	N=38	N=16	N=14	N=39	N=16	N=12

Table II. Initial Perception of degree of difficulty of Blackboard quizzes—all sections.

If one looks only at the percentages responding that Blackboard quizzes were "difficult" or "very difficult," the negatives are quite low with the data for 2002 being even lower than the previous semester. This decrease in the level of difficulty experienced is due partly to the fact that at least a third of the students in French 2 and in

Spanish 2 were students who had continued with this same instructor from the Fall Semester 2001 and thus were "accustomed" to the Blackboard system. Another factor, intangible though it may be, was that the instructor herself was much more at ease and confident with the system and that this ease translated into the students' expectation that the Blackboard assessments were not difficult.

One cannot help but notice, however, that nearly a third (31%) of those students who had taken the multimedia quizzes (Spanish 3, Fall semester 2001) found such a system difficult to very difficult to use. This relatively high percentage was due to the fact that many students could not successfully navigate between the audio/video content which was housed in the External Links section of the Welcome Page (see Figure 1) and the comprehension quizzes. If a student disregarded directions and went first to the quiz (which might appear intuitive) before doing the viewing/listening, the student could find himself "locked out" and unable to enter the assessment for the second time. While many students were able to avoid this pitfall by minimizing each screen, it was decided in the Spring semester that all students would be allowed multiple entries to the quiz site. (This is easily done by checking the multiple entries option on the Save and Make Available Page.) This was done to ensure that the students would concentrate on the video/audio content without fear of the mechanics of the quiz procedure which strictly disallowed more than one attempt at a quiz.

Allowing multiple entries is ultimately not a viable alternative, however, since the current Blackboard system does not average grades but merely allows students to retake the quiz as many times as needed to attain a perfect score. Multiple entries, in fact, mean

unlimited entries. A perfect score could be achieved by taking note of the incorrect answers and resubmitting the quiz with the correct answers.

On a more encouraging note, students responded extremely positively to the overall usefulness of the on-line quizzes as shown in Table III.

	Fall 2001		Spring 2002	
Question: Which of the following statements most accurately describes your overall experience with the Blackboard quizzes?	Sp. 1	Fr. 1	Sp. 2	Fr.2.
A) Blackboard quizzes were a complete waste of time.	3%	7%	0%	8%
B) The quizzes helped a little bit to review.	24%	21%	18%	25%
C) The quizzes helped to a moderate degree to review.	39%	36%	36%	42%
D) The quizzes helped a lot in the review process.	34%	36%	46%	25%
Overall positives=Total of B, C and D.	97%	93%	100%	92%
	N=38	N=14	N=39	N=12

Since the focus of the multimedia quizzes was on listening comprehension, the students who took these assessments were asked to rate the overall usefulness of the quizzes in improving listening skills:

Question: What was your overall experience with Blackboard?	Sp. 3 Fall 2001	Sp.3 Spring 2002
It was a complete waste of time.	25%	6%
It helped a little bit to listen to real Spanish	25%	50%
It helped a lot to listen to real Spanish.	44%	19%
It helped a lot to listen to real Spanish and it was interesting.	6%	25%
	N=16	N=16

Table IV: Perception of Overall Usefulness of Multimedia Quizzes.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the student surveys, the viability of the weekly Blackboard quizzes for foreign language classes seems assured. One of the original considerations of this study, indeed, the paramount one, was to save class time by requiring students to take electronic rather than weekly pencil and paper assessments. Because the students successfully manipulated the new medium, between 10 and 15

minutes of class time were saved each week which was more profitably used in the mastery of the course material.

Not insignificantly, instructor time was also greatly conserved since the quizzes are self-correcting and self-tabulating with each student's results being entered in the on-line gradebook.

Additionally, the criterion of "value added" played a decisive role in the implementation and continuation of the pilot study. The application had to "add value" to the class experience in a way heretofore impossible. "Value added" was most clearly evident in the multimedia quizzes which allowed for new and easy ways to deliver audio/video from the web and simultaneously provide for self-correcting and self-tabulating listening comprehension quizzes.

An additional "value added" feature which was not much utilized during the course of the Pilot Study was the feedback option which is accessible from the Save and Make Available Page--the last page to be completed before putting the quiz on line. The feedback option enables the instructor to add comments and/or explanations in the case of either a correct or incorrect quiz answers. Since these sorts of comments can only be entered manually (and laboriously) on each student's hard copy, the platform provides a useful time-saving option which can only aid in student mastery of the subject matter.

There are nonetheless disadvantages to using the Blackboard Assessment Program. For many, the greatest concern was the integrity of the examination process itself. Since students are unsupervised during the quiz there is no way to limit the amount or nature of the help received. Short of requiring that the students take the quizzes in a supervised locale, quizzes cannot be anything but open book. While a major obstacle to

some, this posed no real disadvantage to this writer because quizzes--even pen and paper ones--had always been viewed as learning exercises rather than as strictly graded events. Nonetheless, beginning students in the first and second semesters experienced traditional examination anxiety due primarily to the new format. This was quickly allayed midsemester when they were informed that the quizzes were going to be graded according a Pass/ Fail scale (70% and above). This helped focus the students' attention on quizzes as review exercises for the in-class examinations.

For the quiz creator, the greatest challenge was in locating stable, appropriate and archived audio/video for the multimedia quizzes. While Chilean, Argentine, French and other television networks do broadcast video using the RealPlayer plug-in (the only plug-in used in this project), these programs are either live or briefly archived which makes them impractical for class assignments. Other sites were found to be inappropriate for other reasons as was the case for the SCOLA site,(http://www.scola.org/) which provides an InstaClass lesson complete with reliable, archived audio from French and Mexican television complete with a transcript in the target languages. Because English translations are also provided, however, this SCOLA site could not be profitably used for listening comprehension exercises.

Sometimes appropriate sites can be found by perusing the "archive" section of a web site. This was indeed the case of BBC Mundo which provided a good bit of archived audio by clicking on the Especiales link on the main page. This audio material was frequently available for periods longer than a month. Let it be clearly understood that the use of reliable links in the External Links section of the Blackboard platform poses no technological or bandwidth problems. What is consistently available to the instructor at

home on a dial up connection will be equally available to students who access the External Links section of the Blackboard site.

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Signature: Kathleen M. Fritz	Printed Name/Position/Title: Kathleen M. Fritz, Assistant Professor	
Organization/Address: Carolina Plaza # 416 University of South Carolina Columbia, SC 29208	Telephone: (803) 777-8155	Fax: (803) 777-9357
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